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ABSTRACT

A study to determine teachers' attitudes toward inservice education programs was conducted in relation to the RISE (Regional In Service Education) Teacher Center (Connecticut), which provided two types of service: mandated inservice programs for participating schools, and voluntary professional development programs. Data for the study were obtained through interviews with 36 teachers categorized as nonusers, occasional users, and frequent users of the voluntary and mandated RISE programs. Teachers' perceptions were gathered on: (1) purpose of inservice programs; (2) inservice and curriculum development; (3) administration and inservice; (4) choice versus compulsory programs; (5) preferred inservice; (6) responsibility and control of professional growth; (7) RISE physical resources; (8) advisors and consultants; (9) teacher center policy board; (10) preservice education; (11) children's learning; (12) adults' learning; (13) career satisfaction; and (14) life plan. Three interrelated themes emerged from the responses as essential issues; these themes reflected the teachers' views of themselves as professionals and as individuals. In spite of the differences evident from individual beliefs, the interviews supplied useful findings for the teacher center, the overriding theme of which was that RISE provided a composite of attributes, the most important of which was teacher advocacy. (FG)

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FINAL REPORT

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF USER AND NON USER PERCEPTIONS OF A TEACHER CENTER AND INSERVICE

by

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for

RISE Teacher Center
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July 1981

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ABSTRACT

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF USER AND NON USER PERCEPTIONS OF A TEACHER CENTER AND INSERVICE

The current trend toward the use of teacher centers as an avenue for teacher growth and development has created substantial professional interest. Relevant literature to date, however, has been primarily descriptive and theoretical, and until very recently no research had been found which addresses teachers' perceptions as outcomes. Neither has any study been identified that characterizes users and non users of a rural teacher center.

RISE Teacher Center has completed its fourth year of service to 500 teachers in nine towns in east-central Connecticut. A demographic survey of these teachers revealed three categories of their usage of this center: Non Users, Occasional Users, and Frequent Users. The major purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of teachers representative of these categories with regard to their beliefs about the effects of inservice and other teacher center services upon themselves.

A research team was formed and trained to collect the data by conducting in-depth oral history interviews with 36 teachers representative of the sampling criteria. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed in accordance with the phenomenological attitude of reduction in order to identify essences of these teachers' perceptions. Analyses were conducted independently by two people experienced in such research; their findings were then studied for agreement upon essence and major and minor themes.

Teachers who voluntarily used the center's services clearly confirmed the values incorporated in its organizational plan and services. Elements of inservice that consisted of personal choice, collegial sharing, program content that could be seen and/or applied in the classroom, and presentations made by practicing teachers rather than visiting "experts" were most valued. It was also agreed that teachers should be involved in determination and planning of programs. Wariness toward administrator control of in-service was extensively documented. Three essences constituted major themes throughout the discourse generated by this study: empowerment; locus of control; trust.

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I. Introduction

In recent years the resources and energies committed to the ongoing professional development of classroom teachers have increasingly been invested in teacher centers. Federal, state, local and private funding have provided the necessary resources to generate a steady proliferation of centers across the country. While most programs are in their first and second years of operation, many precursor centers have been serving teachers for a longer time. These more seasoned programs incorporate a richness of experience and resources that invites formal research aimed at providing clearer understanding of the essence of effective functioning. This document reports upon one such investigation.

At the time of this study the RISE (Regional In Service Education) Teacher Center had completed its fourth year of service to approximately five hundred teachers in rural, east-central Connecticut. RISE provides two broad services: mandated inservice programs for participating schools; voluntary professional development programs for teachers of member schools. While all teachers had been exposed to the Center through mandated inservice, only a portion had opted to attend voluntary programs. This study examines similarities and differences of perceptions among teachers categorized as "Non Users", "Occasional Users", and "Frequent Users" of the voluntary programs offered by RISE.

The study began during the summer of 1980 with the formation of a research team: six interviewers to collect the data; a research consultant to assist in the training of the interviewers and the analysis of data; the principal investigator who authored and directed the project. Owing to the amount of time required for transcribing interviews and the painstaking process of analysis, the project has continued for ten months. Thirty-six teacher interviews produced a plethora of data, much of which was quite rich. The process of reaching a final analysis has been gradual, and statements of findings have been expressed with due awareness of the limitations of the study.

- Findings and conclusions are limited to analysis of interview data for the thirty-six participants who were interviewed.
- The quality of interviews varied considerably in accordance with the skills of the interviewers, the openness of the interviewees, and the interpersonal dynamic between interviewer and interviewee.
- While the research consultant and the principal investigator enjoyed a high incidence of agreement in identifying "essences" in the interviews, it is not assumed that another researcher would exact precisely the same findings.

A. General Problem

Teacher center research has been primarily descriptive and theoretical. Very little data addresses questions of outcomes, and until this study was already in process no research had been identified which sought to identify attributes and perceptions of teachers who could be classified as "users" and "non users". Furthermore, no research was found that explored perceptions of teachers who lived and taught in a rural area. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of teachers categorized as "Non Users", "Occasional Users", and "Frequent Users" of RISE Teacher Center through the medium of in-depth oral history interviews. More precisely, the study sought to identify these teachers' perceptions regarding the effects of inservice and teacher center services upon themselves.

B. Research Questions

1. What are these teachers' beliefs about inservice programs with regard to:

    a. educational philosophy and goals of the system
    b. relationship to professional development/ renewal
    c. curriculum development
    d. roles and functions of the administration
    e. relevance and usefulness of programs
    f. teacher participation in determining programs
    g. freedom of choice vs. compulsory programs

2. What are their beliefs about RISE Teacher Center with regard to:

    a. physical resources
    b. advisor/consultant services
    c. benefits unique to the teacher center format
    d. teacher involvement in center governance (policy board)
    e. teacher participation in determining programs
    f. relevance of programs to felt needs of self and colleagues
    g. factors which motivate/mitigate against involvement

3. What are these teachers' beliefs with regard to:

    a. adequacy of their preservice training
    b. individual teacher responsibility for professional development
    c. sense of control over one's professional development
    d. children's learning
    e. adult learning
    f. career satisfaction
    g. life plan

II. Research Design

The investigation is triploid in that it synthesizes three evidential sources:

1. A description of the RISE Teacher Center program incorporating its conceptual, organizational and service features was approved by the Director and Staff. (Appendix A)
2. Tape-recorded oral history interviews were conducted with a representative sample of thirty-six teachers from the RISE service area. In order to achieve as broad representation as possible, the sample was first balanced according to sex, then according to years of teaching experience. (Table I) Frequency of voluntary use of the center was obtained via a demographic survey conducted during the winter of 1979-80. (Appendix B) The sample was further restricted to include only teachers who had served in RISE area schools for two years or more.

3. Tape recorded interviews were then transcribed, making sure that any references to proper names which might prove to be embarrassing were deleted. In-depth analysis of each transcription was then conducted independently by the research consultant and the principal investigator,

Table I

DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEWEES BY SAMPLING CRITERIA

		Years of Teaching Experience		
		2-5 years	6-12 years	13-26 years
Non Users (NU)	Male	2	2	2
	Female	2	2	2
Occasional Users (OU)	Male	2	2	2
	Female	2	2	2
Frequent Users (FU)	Male	2	2	2
	Female	2	2	2

N=36

A. Research Team

Candidates for interviewer positions were recommended by members of the Teacher Center Policy Board, the RISE Staff, and the Director. Recommendations were encouraged on the basis of judgements regarding candidates' personal character, professional attitudes, amount and quality of teaching experience, and personality attributes complimentary to the interviewing functions. A large group of prospects was reduced to a smaller group of twelve. Each of these people was then interviewed by the principal investigator. Evidence of interest in the research, expressions of readiness to participate in the training process, and preparedness to attend conscientiously to the meticulous procedures of specialized interviewing were weighed in reaching final determination regarding the six interviewer appointments.

The training course for interviewers was conducted from July 23-24, 1980. The format of the course juxtaposed description and demonstration of appropriate technique with extensive rehearsal/practice by the trainees. Video-tapes depicting appropriate and inappropriate technique were specially prepared for the course. Practice interviews were reviewed and critiqued by everyone involved. By the end of the third day interviewers expressed their readiness and eagerness to begin their work. The final preparatory step was the matching of interviewers and interviewees. Care was taken to insure that they were not previously acquainted.

B. Interviews

Subjects were contacted by the interviewers to arrange mutually convenient times and locations for their sessions. Interviews ranged in length of time from one hour and twenty minutes to two and one half hours, and they were all completed before the end of August, 1980.

This phase of the data collection process proceeded without incident. Only one interviewee previously scheduled had to be replaced, owing to family illness. The first alternate contacted was available and willing to participate. The remainder of the interviews were scheduled without difficulty. Release forms were signed by each subject amid assurances that complete confidentiality would be maintained (Appendix C) It had been explained that their interview would henceforth be referred to by code, and all proper names used would be stricken from the record. (Appendix D)

C. Treatment of Data

The final phase of data collection involved the transcribing of interviews prior to analysis. A group of typists had been assembled for that task. At the time the proposal was developed it was assumed that the principal investigator and the secretary at RISE would organize and supervise the typist pool. In the interim, however, both of these people left the teacher center's employ, the former person moving out of state and the latter accepting a position in a nearby city. These changes greatly complicated the transcribing process. Gradually enough typists were identified and retained, and the transcribing was completed by the end of April, 1981. This was approximately five months later

than had been originally planned, thus delaying the completion of data analysis until June 1981.

III. Findings

This investigation has generated expressions of opinion, belief and conviction that touch a multitude of topics. It was apparent that with few exceptions these teachers held and were willing to share strong, often passionate views regarding circumstances unique to their personal and professional lives. Several transcripts reveal a depth of reflection and insight that is simultaneously exciting and humbling. Such interviews are on their own worthy of thoughtful reading and contemplation. In order to give structure to the reporting of the composite data, however, the following pattern will be observed.

First the data will be reported as documentary interpretation following a pattern generally suggested by the research questions. This data is found in section "III. A. Perceptions". Phenomenological essences were determined in most of the interviews, and section "III, B. Essences" will contain these results expressed in terms of major themes. Although this somewhat tedious process is not essential to the presentation of the study, it is incorporated here for two reasons. First, this researcher is aware of other contemporary research investigating teachers' perceptions of teacher centers. It seems likely that results from such similar studies might be used to foment further examination for agreement/disagreement. Second, it seems probable that a

piece-by-piece examination of the data in this study will be of formative value to RISE. Other teacher centers, notably rural centers, may also find this explication useful.

A. Perceptions

1. Purpose of Inservice Programs

Several questions solicited respondents' beliefs about the rationale for inservice, and some intriguing differences emerged from their responses when examined by sampling categories. Non Users (NU) responded with commentary that can be fairly characterized as "deficiency" oriented. They spoke in terms of "remedying teacher deficiencies" and "filling gaps". Also mentioned frequently was the need "to show the public that we are trying to improve" and "trying to solve our problems:. Several respondents cited as an example the attention being given to improving methods of disciplining students.

Frequent Users (FU) on the other hand spoke of inservice in terms of a "human growth" orientation. It was also perceived as a vehicle for improving teaching and helping teachers become more aware of new ideas and options, but more frequently mentioned were references to "responding to teachers' needs" and "rejuvenation...encouraging growth".

Occasional Users (OU) spoke principally in terms of "keeping up to date on ideas, techniques, materials ... helping teachers gain new skills and understandings".

It is noteworthy in this author's judgement that only one

respondent expressed belief about the rationale for inservice in terms of "helping us serve children better." Likewise, no one spoke of inservice directly as a vehicle for carrying out the goals and philosophy of the school system, although an awareness of such a function became evident in other discourse.

2. Inservice and Curriculum Development

A substantial majority of teachers in all three categories equated curriculum development with the selection for classroom use of publisher textbooks, kits and other commercially available materials. Several teachers opined that "inservice should help integrate current trends into curriculum" and that this function "should be done much better." OU and FU teachers also mentioned with substantial frequency the importance of "sharing examples of good teaching done by others." This theme reemerged later in discourse concerning preferred inservice programs.

It was apparent to this researcher that these teachers found it quite natural to think of curriculum in terms of published teaching materials. Secondary themes concerned the propriety of teacher participation in selecting materials, the importance of teachers being aware of materials being used at other grade levels, and the need to maintain the appropriate sequence where whole series of texts were in use.

3. Administration and Inservice

Discourse concerning administrators dominated several interviews, and it was an essential part of others. Teachers who perceived their principals positively did not hesitate to compliment and credit them. On the other hand, teachers who saw their administrators in darker ways were likewise candid in expressing their views. It was evident in several transcripts and tapes that the interviewer's invitation to comment about administrators served as an important "opening up" phase of the session. Few teachers spoke of their principals with consistent indifference.

Non Users appeared in general to be content with their administrators taking responsibility for deciding and planning inservice. Several saw it as "his job" to facilitate, to liason with RISE if necessary. A few teachers conveyed specific feelings of alienation from inservice and the principal. In contrast to the dominant theme of NU expressions, two males expressed beliefs that administrators should "support teachers' needs and interests" by providing an organizational format for teachers to make such decisions. They envisioned principals working to secure inservice programs based upon "teachers' expressed priorities." They clearly advocated administrative support for teachers. As their interviews progressed it became clear that while these men met the criteria for Non User, there were previously unknown and significant qualifying circumstances: both men held second jobs they reported as necesary to supplement their teaching salaries; they were Non Users

of RISE programs as a consequence of their shortage of time, not because they chose not to take advantage of opportunities for professional growth through RISE.

Occasional Users' discourse was dominated by two themes of virtually equal incidence and depth: first was their desired view of how administrators could best function in relation to inservice; second was their perception of how they believed they actually do function. The former, more idealized view held that principals and other administrators should "provide what teachers want ... facilitate and expedite ... provide time ... coordinate with RISE." Allowance was also made for administrators to select programs from time to time which they believed served a specific need in their school. A general policy whereby programs would be mandated by principals was seen as bad policy, however. By way of summary, this view characterized the administrative role as one of "service to teachers' expressed needs and priorities."

These OU respondents' perceptions of the actuality of administrators' functioning was quite different. The teachers tended to believe that the principals saw themselves as "better than teachers ... unable to come down to the staff's level." When they were actually involved they were perceived "in an adversary role ... interfering ... acting as evaluators ... more than supporters." Several teachers stated emphatically that "principals should be participants, not overseers." Two teachers were exceptionally negative in their commentary about

administrators, characterizing them as the major source of their professional frustrations.

Frequent Users appeared to be much less concerned about administrators than their colleagues in the other two categories. Only one teacher expressed resentment toward the principal for "overseeing inservice instead of participating." They did advocate administrative support for teachers' needs and ideas, and they frequently mentioned the importance of administrators providing teachers with choice of programs. As will be seen later in this report, the element of choice in programs constituted a major theme. Also mentioned by some of these teachers was the observation that "the principal's cooperation with RISE was very important in order to have a good school." One view unique to teachers in this category concerned the desirability of a principal who would "guide me to new ideas or materials."

From this evidence and testimony, there can be no doubt that the administration's role in inservice is a value-laden, sometimes emotionally-charged phenomenon in the perceptions of the majority of these teachers. Principals would be well-advised to recognize the power of such beliefs and incorporate that awareness in their future professional posturing.

4. Choice vs. Compulsory Programs

The subjects were extremely clear in articulating their belief that teachers should be able to choose inservice programs from among several options. Many teachers described how much better they learned from inservice when they had chosen to attend. Several recounted how they "turned off" to mandated programs as a quiet act of rebellion. Compulsory inservice was generally equated with administrative determination, and as indicated in the preceding section, trust and the lack of it for administrators posed a fundamental problem. Also like the belief discussed previously, the majority of these teachers were agreeable to and supportive of compulsory inservice when it was jointly determined by trusted colleagues. These subjects were quite clear in their expressions of resentment over having to attend programs planned in a manner alien to these preceding conditions. Underneath these impassioned expressions is the broader, more powerful issue of control: in one's personal development/growth; in one's classroom/school; in one's personal life. A major theme in the findings of this investigation concerns such control ... feelings of power and powerlessness. This essence will be discussed further in section "III, B.,1., Empowerment.

5. Professional Growth: Responsibility and Control

Half of the NU subjects acknowledged that each teacher was responsible for his/her own professional growth and development. They saw personal and professional growth as mutually beneficial. "They go together," as stated by one teacher. They also relate

that exercizing one's responsibility for professional growth created more positive feelings about oneself, producing greater self-confidence. As examples of their having exercized such responsibility they cited academic courses, graduate degree, reading and/or travel.

The other half of the NU teachers indicated that the responsibility for teachers' professional development lay with the state or local school system. Three teachers indicated their belief that it was "up to the superintendent." The primary example cited by these respondents was the state/district requirement that all teachers must already have or be working toward a graduate degree.

Only two OUs agreed that professional development was the responsibility of people other than oneself. Many OU and FU teachers indicated that administrative support was valued, but they were in full agreement that ultimately the responsibility was each individual's, that meaningful growth was a consequence of one's inner desire or motivation. They also mentioned frequently that administrators' awareness of their efforts and achievements was valued.

Most frequently mentioned by OU and FU teachers was that "it feels so good to be in charge of my development ... of feelings of greater competence ... of being more effective with students." Again, these verbalizations were expressions of personal power, worth and control, i.e., feelings of pride in oneself.

6. Preferred Inservice

When asked to discuss aspects of inservice that attracted them to and repelled them from inservice, only the NUs opted to dwell upon deterrents. More than half of these teachers responded that "there just isn't enough time." Two teachers went on to describe in elaborate detail the reasons why they did not choose to participate in voluntary programs: problems with travel to the teacher center; responsibilities at home; the belief that such activity would interfere with their concentrating upon their students. When asked about programs for which release time was provided, several teachers indicated that they believed it was "unprofessional to be out of class on a school day except for illness." Others recounted that it was simply "unfair to the children to be out of class." Others commented that "preparing for a substitute teacher was too great a hassle." Regardless of whether one interprets these protestations as reasons or excuses for withdrawing from opportunities for professional development, the reader must be impressed with the elaborateness and detail of these NU explanations.

The approximately seventy-five per cent of the teachers who spoke affirmatively about inservice were in general agreement about the attributes that attracted them to programs. There were, however, some subtle and significant differences.

NU teachers who spoke positively about inservice almost unanimously voiced two appealing qualities. First, they preferred programs which provided "things I can use in my classroom." In using the word "things" they were including ideas,

materials and organizational strategies. There was an essential qualifier, however; these "things" they valued must be observable, i.e., "something I can see." There was an implicit distrust of "things" that were only talked about. A further aspect of this theme concerned the credibility of the presenter; these teacners most willingly and easlily trusted other teachers. Several NUs articulated a general distrust of "experts", and visiting college professors were the examples most frequently cited.

The second most valued attribute of preferred programs is consistent with the first. Opportunities to discuss issues they as teachers cared about were highly valued, but according to this NU discourse, they occurred infrequently. Several respondents related poignant anecdotes recounting their feelings of impersonality in their school and isolation from their peers. Another facet of this theme was their expressed preference for programs planned and/or conducted by teachers. Also mentioned was their repeated emphasis upon their opportunity to express personal choice as to which programs they attended. Several teachers added that "when they were able to choose, they had a much more positive attitude toward inservice." It seems appropriate at this point to remind the reader that these are expressions of majority view by NU teachers, i.e., those who have not participated in voluntary teacher center programs.

OU teachers also valued programs they perceived as "relevant to my work." Several of them mentioned programs planned for their particular grade or subject matter. They also valued programs that were "applicable to my classroom," ones in which teachers shared their work, and ones which they had chosen.

FU teachers overwhelmingly valued over any other attribute programs they had freely chosen. They also valued the same qualities already documented, but choice was the critical element. A quality unique to the commentary of FU teachers referred to "ones which give you the spark for teaching," i.e., programs which aroused or stimulated or motivated them toward feelings of renewal in their teaching practices.

7. RISE Physical Resources

Few of the NU teachers had ever been to the teacher center so they were unable to comment about its physical resources. In a few cases they volunteered that they had not been there because "it took too much time" or that it was simply inconvenient.

Almost all OU and all FU teachers had visited the center, and they were equally enthusiastic about it. They agreed that the material resources were very useful, and they were critical only in terms of there being inadequate space for a comfortable degree of privacy. A very subtle but extremely significant quality emerged in these teachers' response to queries about the physical center. It was evident to this researcher that according to the bulk of this discourse, RISE is perceived in terms of a "personification." It is not just a physical place, a collection of materials, a group of people, a newsletter, a series of inservice programs. It is even more than a composite of these elements, and that effects a personification of RISE. Strongly articulated value statements characterized it as providing teachers with emotional support, where they

felt welcome and safe, where there was an atmosphere of respect, where there was a sense of humor, where one could simply browse because there was an absence of pressure and expectation. One comment seemed to reflect the essence of these expressions: ... "openness and willingness draws me to RISE and I realize that I'm not alone." Recommended improvements or needs were represented in one teacher's observation that "all you need is more of what you already have."

8. Advisor/Consultants

NU teachers' commentary about RISE staff members who visited their schools was minimal since they had used this service so little. Those who had used the service described it simply as "helpful"; several mentioned that it was useful to have someone bring materials from RISE. Others indicated that "it was hard to make contact with the advisors"; still others thought the service was a good idea but inconsequential to them personally. Two NUs were unaware of the existence of this service.

These RISE staff members who visit member schools to consult with and assist teachers are the key element in the preceding assertion regarding the personification of RISE in the perceptions of OU and FU teachers. The focus of these teachers' responses to queries about the RISE advisors was upon the personal and professional emotional support they constitute. OU respondents gave substantial credit to them for being supportive, helpful and, especially, providing a vital communication link between teachers and RISE. They

were especially conscious of the time and work saving consequences of advisors bringing things from the center.

FU teachers were even more enthusiastic in their praise, offering complimentary comments such as, "she appreciates the pressures I'm feeling," and "he makes me feel like what I'm doing is worthwhile." In essence, advisors were perceived not only as helpers and supporters but also as personal advocates for teachers. Again, the element of trust emerged. It is appropriate to conceptualize all respondents, compliments dichotomously: statements explaining how advisors facilitated their professional work; statements expressing the personal emotional support they felt.

9. Teacher Center Policy Board

Three NU teachers were unaware that the Policy Board governed RISE activities. The remainder of teachers in this sample enthusiastically endorsed this manner of providing for teachers' needs. Comments indicating that "teachers know best their own and other teachers' needs" were common. Several FU teachers expressed optimism that this feature would make it more possible for teachers' real needs to surface. The essence of the issue was, again, trust, and implied again was a distrust of administration.

10. Preservice Education

Reactions to preservice education were mixed within and among the three groups. Aside from the incidence of commentary explicating individual aspects of one's personal experience

it was judged that for the great majority of these practicing teachers, the college training years were somewhat remote.

There was extensive agreement within the sample with regard to the two most valuable components of their preservice: the extent of direct experience with children in school settings; learning practical ways to teach. Theory, general education courses, and college professors who were "out-of-touch with children" were widely panned.

11. Children's Learning

Most of the teachers' commentary about children's learning was notable in its vagueness, scattered emphases, and paucity of common beliefs. During the study of the interviews regarding this topic, this researcher was struck by the impression that for many respondents the entreaty to discuss children's learning came into the interview as an almost alien element. This impression gained further support from subsequent inquiries regarding adults' learning. The most frequent response to questions concerning how adults learn was, "just like kids learn." Somewhat nebulous and platitudinous references to "a positive atmosphere and "work on their own level" and"being motivated" were typical. Because of the quick dispatch given to this question by the majority of teachers in the sample, no general characterization of belief is appropriate.

12. Adults' Learning

As already indicated, the knee-jerk response to this query was predominantly that children and adults learn alike. This

researcher was impressed again by a sense that this topic was perceived as out of context for the interview, perhaps simply unexpected. Unlike the discussion of children's learning, however, time for reflection brought out a point which might be considered thematic on a limited basis. Several OU and FU teachers revealed that adults learn best when they are "self-motivated." Subsequent commentary suggested that this meant that adults learn something when the motivation to do so comes from within, i.e., the individual has chosen to learn. This minor theme is consistent with previously identified themes regarding the value of personal choice.

13. Career Satisfaction

Responses to questions regarding the most essential elements to career satisfaction were fascinating for their similarities and their differences. First, teachers in all three categories indicated quite clearly that the single most essential element was the knowledge that they were being effective and successful with their students. Although it was verbalized in many different ways, the essence of the dominant response is captured in the expression," I know because of what I can see that I am good at my work." It is important to note that this is an expression of belief based upon observable phenomena, i.e., belief based upon knowledge. Also discussed as significant to career satisfaction were personal good feelings and a sense of well-being that was not directly connected to student behaviors.

It is noteworthy that NU teachers offered very little else as a source of career satisfaction. Compatible colleagues and an open, non-threatening principal were mentioned by a few teachers in this category, but they did not rival the previously stated dominating theme.

OU teachers also commented with considerable emphasis about the importance of external approval. Over half of these teachers mentioned recognition from administration, parents, colleagues and society in general as an important element in career satisfaction. They also indicated frequently that threats to career satisfaction were constituted in feelings of powerlessness in the face of administrators and the difficulty of living on teachers' salaries.

Teachers in the FU category spoke even more frequently about the difficulties of feeling career satisfaction in the face of little or no public respect. Many believed that "society doesn't value teachers." Half of these teachers expressed grave concern about being able to financially afford to continue teaching, and four of them were engaged in serious contemplation of a career change at the time of the interview.

Conclusive interpretation of the preceding results is hazardous. The data does suggest, however, that the teachers most inactive (NU) in furthering their professional development through teacher center programs revealed the least amount of career dissatisfaction.

14. Life Plan

Discussions concerning life plans extended the themes suggested by the discussion of career satisfaction. For example, only one NU indicated that a career change might be in the offing. On the other hand,, only one FU indicated firm intentions to continue indefinitely as a teacher. These tendencies are somewhat abrogated by the fact that half of the teachers in all groups indicated they had given no serious thought to a life plan. They do serve to illustrate, however, that among those teachers who had thought in terms of life plans, those in the OU and FU groups were thinking much more frequently in terms of changes to other careers.

Reasons offered for possible career changes were also familiar: inadequate income, lack of public respect for teache and the need for support. Five of the six male teachers in the FU category expressed these sentiments. It seems likely that many of them will soon make a career change if that has not already occurred by this writing.

B. Essences

This study provided an opportunity for thirty-six teachers to talk confidentially about themselves, their beliefs about their personal and professional lives, their anxieties and gratifications. In keeping with the oral history format of the interview sessions, the subjects were free to respond as extensively or discretely as they chose. The ultimate objective of the study was always to try to gather data which would improve our understanding of how RISE Teacher Center and the services it offers impact upon these individuals. The search for essences was continuous.

It is also appropriate to keep in mind that these subjects were speaking foremost about themselves, secondarily about the "objects" of their perceptions such as RISE, one's students, the principal, and so on. While useful insight about some of these "objects" were obtained, the strongest themes identified in this project are those which concern these teachers' views of themselves. In spite of the numerous differences among these thirty-six people as revealed in their commentary, there are some noteworthy similarities.

Before delving into these essences, however, some additional qualifiers are appropriate. As stated earlier (section III, A, 8 and 9), RISE appeared to have undergone "personification" in the perceptions of these respondents. Furthermore, these individuals typically did not make any distinctions between inservice programs and voluntary workshops. Their reactions were made directly to RISE as a composite of the assortment of activities

and services it provides. It was also evident that the seriousness with which these subjects regarded RISE varied. For the most part NUs dismissed RISE as something that was nice, helpful - but "not for me." No doubt that explained much of why such individuals qualified for the NU category. They were much more content to have inservice left up to the administration. They did not take inservice seriously. They were inclined to think of "professional development" in terms other that "inservice" and "teacher center."

Finally, the ultimate outcome of truly reductive phenomenological research should be the same for virtually all people: each of us is engaged in our own efforts "to become," to actualize our individual potential for life. It may be that we have idealized mental pictures of ourselves, how we would most like to be. Such self-seeking may be quite general, direction-oriented; it may also be quite circumspect. In this study, essences constitute three major themes. These are the essential issues for these teachers. Individual manifestations of these essences vary considerably, but they are also predictably interrelated. For purposes of clarity in this report, however, they will be described separately.

1. Empowerment

The need to believe that one is in control of his/her professional and personal life constituted a major essence of this study. In their various ways the subjects indicated that a primary ongoing concern was for recognition of their individual uniqueness, respectability, validity as a professional person.

Sources of recognition that were too often lacking were words and special gestures made by supervisory/administrative personnel, parents and "the general public." These teachers commonly see themselves as practitioners of professional work about which they deeply feel personal responsibility. In spite of all efforts, feedback from the adult world was reported as frequently critical, often disparaging and sometimes discouraging. These teachers also expressed feelings of powerlessness to change the public's perceptions. As already described, these feelings of helplessness to "correct the profession" contributed to self-doubt and reexamination of priorities.

The empowerment theme was much stronger among OU and FU teachers than among NUs, who did not perceive RISE as a particularly relevant resource for their needs. NUs were minimally concerned about power/control issues. They did value the opportunities to choose which inservice they attended, and several of them voiced preferences for inservice work with their colleagues. But they appeared to be generally willing to accept and work with whatever programs their administrators planned, even if the programs were compulsory. A few NUs were even more explicit on this point in saying that planning and providing inservice were part of the principal's job. Apparently whatever power needs NUs may have felt were being resolved without drawing upon the teacher center. Furthermore, they were content with those circumstances. They did acknowledge that given the great variety of individual needs among teachers, it is good and appropriate that RISE exists and functions as it

does for teachers who benefit from it.

Testimony from most OU teachers and all FUs confirmed that RISE does address empowerment needs. The perceived conditions that teachers govern the center, plan programs, employ personnel and represent teacher concerns to administrators were all highly valued aspects of the center. In several cases where respondents reported conflicts with their school authority, they described RISE as their advocate. With few exceptions these OUs and FUs characterized RISE as an embodiment of respect for teachers and faith in them in a world where such regard was rare.

The incidence of expressions regarding individual choices and professional development was extremely high in these interviews, and it was in commenting about choice that many teachers pursued a conversational tack that revealed personal empowerment needs. Permission to choose from among several inservice options, simple a matter as that may be, was perceived by teachers as evidence of their "worth and maturity" in the minds of administrators. Opportunity to participate in decision-making on matters of consequence was regarded as exceptional recognition. By simply counting the number of times these respondents spoke about administrators one can confirm the power represented by the principal in their perceptions.

One other empowerment topic that was frequently discussed by OUs and extensively reported by FUs concerns the extent to which financial remunerations symbolize power. Those who commented about "merit pay" did so with an air of suspicion and distrust.

Teachers were in agreement in the view that they received salaries that were less than the value of their services, less than they needed to meet modest living costs. These low salaries were perceived as tangible evidence of society's value of their work. By accepting such reduced economic power, one was admitting to equivalent professional power. Yet, they articulated no actions envisioned to remedy their economic circumstances. Again the theme of powerlessness was restated.

2. Locus of Control

Internal locus of control was characteristic of the discourse of all but three teachers in the sample. Teachers spoke lucidly about their personal needs and satisfactions experienced in teaching, and it was evident that they greatly preferred to look inwardly for judgements regarding the quality of their personal and professional lives. This internal focussing was qualified by consistent evidence of need for support from significant others. It is important to understand that while this need was for support from external sources (spouse, family, students, colleagues, RISE people, administrators, society), it did not vitiate the significance of the internal locus.

Three teachers' commentary contrasted with the others. They were all in the FU category, and locus of control evidence was clearly external. These individuals reported strong anxieties relating to their administrators, and they felt frustration about carrying out their professional responsibilities as they were expected to do. They also commented clearly about freedom.

and independence, and it seemed likely that the career dissatisfaction they described would lead to a career change. Certainly that was at the least a possibility they were already giving active consideration.

As already stated, the great majority of teachers revealed an internal locus of control with support from significant others. The sources and extent of support varied from one individual to another, but the form was fairly common and consistent: "words of encouragement; caring about what I am doing; interested in how things are going; supportive; compliments and praise; a pat on the back; positive reinforcement." Since the people these teachers felt most vulnerable to were administrators, these kinds of feedback from the principal were particularly valued and appreciated. It is important to keep in mind that teachers spoke of occasions when they had received such feedback; they were not only expressing unmet needs.

Another almost equally significant source of external support was students. These teachers spoke frequently about their students' learning, progress and happiness, especially when they recounted sources of career satisfaction. They also valued the support and confidence of parents as a source of personal validation. It was strongly suggested that these teachers felt a somewhat qualified belief in themselves and what they were doing as teachers; evidences of agreement from significant others provided the ultimate confirmation. This quality of personal

approval from RISE advisor/consultants was specifically mentioned as a source of their positive feelings toward the teacher center. It is also an active agent in the previously described "personification" of RISE. More than half of the OUs and almost all of the FUs valued the accord they felt with RISE personnel. Much of their commentary focussed upon the absence of external pressures of expectations and time; also mentioned in this context was the freedom from the fear of "power needs" they attributed to their principals.

The assertion that all but three of the subjects can be characterized as minifesting "an internal locus of control with support from significant others" is substantiated by multifarious references to feelings of professional adequacy. NUs constituted a particularly unique group in this regard; they appeared to be well-defended against issues that troubled OUs and FUs. While they managed to protect themselves quite effectively, they also made themselves virtually inaccessible to the efforts of RISE. With the exception of two male NUs who were unable to use RISE because of the time demands of their second jobs, NU teachers appeared to be satisfied with their professional lives; RISE did not represent a particularly relevant resource to them.

For the most part, however, the teachers in this study evidenced their desires for genuine pride in doing their work well, knowing from within that it was "a job well done." They had given extensive thought to their needs for self-knowledge, and

they saw themselves as continuously growing, changing beings. RISE constitutes a valued ally in those processes, and the importance of the personal service the center renders cannot be denied.

3. Trust

These teachers are no different from the rest of humanity in their preferences for trustworthiness in colleagues and superiors. This essence was suprising only in the extent to which it was powerful in their lives, however. While no one spoke in exactly these words, the interviews did hint at a trust-distrust dichotomy. A powerful theme occasionally articulated and frequently implied was, "the public does not trust us." It appeared that concern about low salaries was, somehow, abated by their tacit acceptance of the validity of the public's lack of confidence in them.

This trust essence was unmistakable in discourse concerning preferred inservice. Governance of the center and decision-making procedures associated with inservice were trusted because they were controlled by other teachers. The cardinal value placed upon one's ability to exercise choice of inservice and control in professional development further substantiate this theme. Likewise significant and consistent with this essence are the numerous expressions of preference for inservice that involved teachers sharing and discussing priorities with each other.

For OUs and NUs these trust-designations for teachers specifically included advisor/consultants from RISE. These weekl

visitors were regarded as colleagues whose current work consisted of supporting and expediting other teachers' work.

A final element of the trust refrain is exemplified in the phrase, "seeing is believing." Teachers in all categories were quicker to trust physical, tangible examples just as they were more willing to trust inservice presentations made by other teachers. Somewhat implied was distrust for presenters who did not work with children, so-called "experts."

C. Implications for RISE Teacher Center

Those in positions of responsibility for the quality of life experienced by teachers in the RISE service area could benefit from reading the transcripts produced by this study. Each interview is in a real sense a collection of messages from an individual about his or her life. Each of these interviewees is engaged in living and growing processes that are unique, sometimes eccentric-appearing in the degrees of differentness from the more customary. But to form beliefs based upon the reading of only one or a few transcripts would be misleading. The quality of interchange varied considerably over the thirty-six conversations. Continuity and consistency varied accordingly. Systematic study and analysis in comparison with the purposes of RISE (Appendix A) does, however, identify some useful implications for RISE and for teachers and administrators of member schools.

First, there can be no doubt that insofar as these teachers are concerned, RISE has made a significant contribution to the

personal and professional growth and welfare of many teachers served by the center. This is not a claim that all teachers have benefitted. It seems probable that owing to the values and life style of some teachers, RISE is unlikely to have significant impact upon everyone. Because of this factor it might be inappropriate to attempt to measure outcomes of RISE services according to individuals who have opted "to go it alone." It is valid, however, to assess services on the basis of the views of teachers who have opted to use center services, however modest that use may be.

Second, although these subjects did not discuss RISE's formal needs assessment mechanisms, they are satisfied that their needs and concerns form the basis for RISE planning. They believe that the center exists primarily to help them, and many of them place great personal value upon that feature.

Third, the importance of RISE's accommodation of teachers' needs to exercize choices and participate in decision-making is upheld by the data. These options are located at the heart of the empowerment theme detailed earlier.

Fourth, respondents who had visited the teacher center spoke favorably, often enthusiastically about it. Concern was voiced about the lack of privacy afforded by the physical arrangement, and most interviewees indicated the belief that the center needed to be much larger. Materials, equipment, books and other resources were complimented.

Fifth, the idea of the policy board, its membership and functions were roundly supported. Firsthand experience with

policy board members and functioning was limited, but the organizational concept was fully endorsed.

Sixth, the advisor/consultants who visit classroom teachers are highly valued, in part for the services they render but in larger measure for their support and encouragement - the teacher advocacy they embody. Without these human manifestations it seems probable to this investigator that teachers' acceptance and use of RISE would be considerably less than it presently enjoys.

Other services performed by the center were also mentioned in the course of the interviews. None, however, stood out above the rest as more essential than others. The overriding theme was one of RISE as a composite of attributes, the most important of which are human, standing tall in a posture of teacher advocacy.

APPENDIX A

Description of RISE Teacher Center

Conceptual

The primary purpose of the RISE Teacher Center is to encourage, enhance and facilitate the personal and professional growth of teachers in schools serving nine towns in east-central Connecticut. Due to the modest size of the systems comprising the service area, no such staff development resources were available prior to the establishment of the Center in 1976. In order to address issues of greatest concern to practicing teachers the programs, resources, and services of the Center are provided on the basis of formally and informally assessed needs, i.e., teachers' perceived needs for curriculum development and implementation. Teachers' choices provide the underlying guide and decision-making impetus for the RISE Staff's decision-making. The transcendant theme, then, is to provide experiences which will help teachers to learn more about themselves and their students -- successful ways to teach, effective materials to facilitate learning, and practical techniques to enhance understanding and decision-making.

Organizational

The Center is housed in an elementary school centrally located among the eleven member schools and less than a thirty minute drive from the most distant school. Its physical resources include: idea books, teacher-made and commercially published curriculum materials, a workshop equipped with tools and materials for hands-on construction, a collection of scrounge and recycle materials, a large area for workshops and meetings, and audio-visual equipment which can be borrowed by teachers. Costs of establishing and maintaining the Center, its personnel, and services are met by local, federal, and private foundation funds.

A policy board made up of teachers elected from each of the participating schools oversees all programs and activities. In addition to these eleven teachers, voting members of the Teacher Center Policy Board include two representatives from boards of education, one school administrator, and a representative from higher education.

In addition to the Director, the staff includes a coordinator, five advisor/consultants, a secretary, and a full-time researcher to carry on the Center's tradition of continual self-evaluation.

Services

In addition to the physical resources of the Center available to teachers, RISE provides outreach services to address teachers' needs in their classrooms and schools. This service is accomplished by the five advisor/consultants who visit member schools weekly to meet with individual teachers regarding on-the-spot needs or concerns and to work with individual school inservice planning teams. They also

Description of RISE Teacher Center (continued)

Services (continued)

conduct workshops in their areas of expertise, follow up on workshops at the request of participating teachers, take part in curriculum study groups, explore and obtain resources, disseminate the monthly newsletter describing programs and activities, co-teach with classroom teachers, and serve as the primary human link between the Center and its constituents.

Additional services RISE provides include:

(a) conducting all day workshops (for which substitute teacher fees are paid by RISE), half day inservice programs, after school and evening programs, and sponsoring university accredited courses.

(b) providing programs in which outside consultants work directly with teachers and students in the classroom.

(c) maintaining ongoing formal and informal assessment of teachers' needs and interests.

(d) introducing innovative ideas, materials and techniques to practicing teachers.

(e) promoting collaborative activity involving teachers within one school and among member schools.

(f) producing a monthly newsletter publicizing Center programs, special projects of interest to teachers, and the activities and accomplishments of teachers within the service area.

(g) conducting an ongoing evaluation of all Center programs and services while exploring new possibilities through formal research.

In summary, RISE Teacher Center exists to provide a total teacher growth system in order that teachers will have support in their efforts to continue their professional development and, therefore, more effectively meet the needs of the students they serve

APPENDIX B

Project RISE, Halls Hill Road, Colchester, CT 06415 (203)537-2117

Participant Information

Name: _____ (last), _____ (first) School: _____ Date: __/__/__

So that we can better understand the usages of Project RISE we ask you to provide the following information at least once during the current school year. If you have already completed this form, it is not necessary to do so again. Thanks for this valuable data!

1. Total number of years teaching experience including the current year: _____
2. Years of teaching experience in present school: _____
   Grade Level and/or subject taught: _____
3. Approximate number of RISE workshops previously attended:
   (check one): ____(0) ____(1-5) ____(6-10) ____(11+)
4. Approximate number of RISE programs other than workshops previously attended:
   (check one): ____(0) ____(1-5) ____(6-10) ____(11+)
5. Approximate number of visits to RISE Center other than to attend workshops:
   (check one): ____(0) ____(1-5) ____(6-10 ____(11+)
6. Approximate number of "projects" (eg. instructional games, classroom furniture, curricular pland, etc.) resulting from RISE "contacts" (eg. advisor, workshops, etc.):
   (check one) ____(0) ____(1-5) ____(6-10) ____(11+)

APPENDIX C

Documentation of Interview

I hereby declare that I participated in an interview with a representative of RISE Teacher Center conducted solely for research purposes on _____ at _____.
(date) (location)

Name: _____

Interviewer: _____

.....

Release Form

I hereby agree that my interview tape and the resulting transcript may be used by RISE Teacher Center in the conduct of research with the proviso that my name and any other proper names used by me and/or the interviewer will be stricken from the tape and the transcript. I also waive any claim to publication rights associated with my interview. I further agree that my anonymous transcript may be kept on file at RISE Teacher Center for use, citation, publication and/or copyright by scholars and students in their learning and research.

Date _____ Name _____

Location _____

_____
(Interviewer)

APPENDIX D

RISE Teacher Center
Halls Hill School
Halls Hill Road
Colchester, Ct.06415

30 June 1980

Dear

We at RISE are very excited about the research we'll be doing this summer, and I am delighted by your willingness to participate. I am writing to fulfill my promise made in our telephone conversation regarding a brief description of the project.

Our interest lies in acquiring statements from you which reflect your perceptions about your professional needs, preferences and development. Our questions are intentionally broad because we want to know your thoughts about your own development. We are not trying to obtain evidence verifying any particular teacher education programs. This research is particularly pure in that we want you to tell us what the issues are as you see them.

One of our interviewers will contact you in late July or early August to arrange a convenient time and place for what we expect will be a one and one half to two hour interview. We wish to convenience you inasmuch as possible as long as the interview takes place before the first of September. The interview will be tape recorded, coded for anonymity and then transcribed. Tapes and typescripts will be analyzed and summarized. A final written report will then be prepared for the funding agency, the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development in San Francisco. I'm hoping the findings and conclusions will be complete by the end of January, 1981. We expect that the results will be disseminated on local, regional and national levels.

I will be out of state until July 22, so if you have any questions about the study do not hesitate to call me at RISE after I return. As you probably recall, the grant allows us to pay you a $ 50 honorarium for your participation. I trust that you will also find the interview to be a beneficial experience.

Best wishes for a healthy, happy summer!

Cordially,

Dr. Christopher Stevenson
Researcher